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ABSTRACT

The Dartmouth College Library has produced this slide/tape individualized instruction module to assist students in researching historical problems. The 79-slide lesson begins with methods of organizing a search and continues through collecting information and analyzing the utility of research strategy. Information sources cited include numerous general materials such as the "Reader's Guide," specific resources such as "America: History and Life" and such indices as the "Bibliographic Index." (JVP)

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RESEARCHING HISTORICAL PROBLEMS

An Introduction to Basic Resources

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(1)

To do effective research on an (2) historical problem, you need a game plan or search strategy to help in dealing with the network of information sources found at the Dartmouth (3) College Library. The array of materials at your disposal include books, journal articles, Government documents, maps, newspapers, as well as numerous kinds of non-printed sources. This (4) slide-tape will take you through a series of logical steps in the research (5) process and introduce those reference tools which can help make the resources of our library more accessible to you.

Whether you begin with a topic firmly in hand (6) or with little more than an inspiration, before more sophisticated searching can be undertaken, it is essential that you establish a firm footing by reading generally on the topic in question. This broad orientation to an historical (7) question is important since it will help you clarify concepts, define terms, locate names and dates or place a complex series of historical events in perspective. (8)

If you are investigating patterns of Urbanization of American cities in the 19th Century, you would want to know exactly how urbanization is defined and some general idea of how and why cities grew before 1850. (9) You may find the assigned reading in your course helpful

(1) Title Slide

(2) Schematic of football plays

(3) Collage of learning resources

(4) Flow chart of search process

(5) Photo of Reference Room

(6) Student receiving inspiration

(7) Student copy names, dates, etc.

(8) Urban sprawl

(9) Reading list in urban studies

but you may also gain such an overview in a (10) good encyclopedia such as the Encyclopedia Brittanica which searches out recognized leaders in particular fields to write specific (11) pieces. This source contains well written, lengthy articles which often provide clues to further research. Another encyclopedia with a (12) somewhat narrower focus is the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences which has acted as a state of the art (13) source that historians can use to orient themselves to the terminology, theories, and methods of the other Social Sciences. Do not limit your introductory efforts to these more general (14) encyclopedias. There are more specific sources that will give needed background information. For example, if your topic concerns the Pre-Columbian Aztec Civilization (15) you would find the Encyclopedia of Latin America quite (16) helpful for concise but authoritative information on Aztec history, social organization and religion. (17) If you need background data for a paper on the Trojan War, the Cambridge Ancient History would serve the purpose; it has a ten page overview on the subject. (18)

Once you have acquired a general knowledge of your research area, it would be particularly worth your while to find a publication which brings together many

(10) Enc. Brittanica -- outside

(11) Brittanica entry on urbanization

(12) Int. Enc. of the Soc. Sciences -- outside

(13) Page of I.E.S.S.

(14) Several specialized encyclopedias

(15) Enc. of Latin America -- outside

(16) Entry of Enc. of L.A. on Aztecs

(17) Cambridge Anc. Hist. -- outside

(18) Bibliography drawing together sources

of the disparate kinds of sources you will need. (19) A tool that provides this service is a bibliography or guide to the literature, which summarizes a body of writings, by providing a selection of the most pertinent works from a much larger pool of available (20) resources.

(19) Collage of bibliographies

(20) Outside of Roach bibliography

Some bibliographies are general and comprehensive as is John Roach's Bibliography of Modern History (21) which covers the main themes of history by citing the principal printed sources from medieval times to 1945, (22) other bibliographies are limited to a listing of a particular type of source (American Diaries in Manuscript), (23) or concern a specific subject area (Nevins, Allen, et al., Civil War Books; a critical bibliography) (24) or deal with writings on the history of an individual country (Writings in British History). Some (25) even list only holdings of a specific library (N.Y.P.L. Schomberg Collection of Negro Literature and History; Dictionary Catalog). It is often the limits established by the producers of bibliographies that make them so useful to students and scholars. (26)

(21) Roach -- interior page

(22) Amer. Diaries in Manuscript -- outside

(23) Civil War Books -- outside

(24) Writings in British History -- outside

(25) Schomberg Collection and N.Y.P.L.

(26) Harvard Guide -- outside

An important bibliographic source for United States Studies is the two-volume Harvard Guide to American History whose revised edition was published in 1974. It (27) is a well-indexed listing of books, periodical articles, Government publications and primary source material and

(27) Table of Contents for Harvard Guide

also includes essays on the methodology, use and materials for historical research which provide a much needed overview of the historian's (28) craft. If you are writing a paper on the Mexican War, the Harvard Guide provides a list of the more important general works, suggests relevant biographies of associated individuals and records primary material such as personal accounts written by individuals close to the events. (29) (Harvard Guide, II, p.817). Let us take another example and follow it more closely. If you are interested in the variety of Abolitionist Arguments Against Slavery in Pre-Civil War America, (30) the listing in the Harvard Guide would save time since it includes books and a broad range of journal articles on abolitionist thought as well as material on individual anti-slavery thinkers (Harvard Guide, II, p.833). (31)

The nucleus of sources found here can also be used to expand your search. The way to proceed would be to examine your list of publications carefully and decide which appear relevant to your (32) needs. If you would like to find Benjamin Quarles's book entitled Black Abolitionists, published in 1969, (33) you would proceed to the author/title section of the card catalog. This is the place to locate particular books if the author or title is (34) known. The card and hence the location of this book can be found by looking up either Quarles, Benjamin,

(28) Harvard Guide page on Mexican War

(29) Abolitionist thought -- title slide

(30) Harvard Guide page on Abolitionists

(31) Cartoon on expanding search using H. G.

(32) Quarles' entry in Harvard Guide

(33) Author/Title Catalog

(34) Main entry of Quarles's book

he author, or the title of the book, Black Abolitionists.
n this case, the author refers to an individual but you
will find that this is not always the (35)
case. Instead, the author may mean a corporate
author such as an association (36)
(AHA) or an educational institution; (37)
or even a government agency. As a rule, the author
is always the person or body intellectually
responsible for the existence of the work. (38)

A catalog card can give you quite a lot of information. For one, it will contain a call number in the upper left hand corner which can be used to locate the book on our shelves. In addition to author and title, the card records the place of publication (New York), the publisher (Oxford Univ. Press), and the date of publication. Underneath (39)
there is a line of additional data called the collation which indicates that there are ten introductory and three hundred and ten numbered pages, that the volume is twenty-two cm. in height and its original list price was six dollars and seventy-five cents. The (40)
remaining parts of the card contain important data for expanding your search. It is indicated that on pages 251 and 252, there is a note on the bibliographical literature and from page 253 to 292, there are bibliographical references. Both of these sections will

(35) Association main entry

(36) College main entry

(37) Gov't agency main entry

(38) Slide # 34

(39) Slide # 34 -- collation emphasis

(40) Slide # 34 -- bibliography emphasis

give you hints to further (41) research materials, the first being the author's recommendations of the sources he feels are most useful and the (42) second are footnotes to the text, where the author cites the authority for statements made throughout the book that are not common knowledge. When the book is located, you should scan these sections for relevant sources on your subject. (43) Your search can also be expanded by the additional data found on the bottom of the catalog card, where the subject headings for a particular book are listed. (44)

(41) Quarles' bibliographical note page

(42) Quarles' bibliographical reference page

(43) Slide # 34 with tracings emphasis

(44) Close-up of tracing from slide # 34 (Graphic)

There are two subject headings for this work:

1. ABOLITIONISTS.
2. SLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES--ANTI-SLAVERY MOVEMENTS.

If we looked under each of these (45) subject headings in the subject catalog, we would get the same card. This means that if we did not know the author or title of any relevant volumes, we still could have found pertinent titles including this one by looking up either of these subject headings in the subject catalog. (46)

(45) Subject cards--Quarles' book

(46) Student copying subject headings

This is exactly how you should proceed to expand your search; copy down these words and (47) move to the subject catalog. Looking up abolitionists and slavery in the U. S.--Anti-slavery movements yields

(47) Abolitionist books and cards

nearly fifty additional titles, from recently published monographs to early nineteenth century tracts by those concerned with Black Emancipation. You can continue the (48) search process and more fully exploit our library holdings by noting additional subject headings found at the bottom of the cards you find here:

(48) Other related subject headings

Slavery in the U. S.--Controversial literature
Slavery and the Church
Underground Railroad
Slavery--Justification
Negroes--Colonization

These additional subject headings will suggest to you ways in which your original topic can be broadened or (49) narrowed.

(49) Slide # 19

We mentioned how diverse bibliographies can be and how helpful they are especially for intensive literature searches. The student can find these specific booklists and (50) guides by consulting the Bibliographic Index which is published twice a year and is cumulated in annual (51) volumes. As a subject approach source, it uses subject headings so you must refer to the terminology associated with your topic that you have derived from your general reading or from your card catalog (52) search. If we look up Abolitionists in the 1973 annual you will notice there are two entries, one bibliography on the subject in general and another concentrating on the biography of specific anti-slavery figures. In these (53)

(50) Bibliographic Index -- outside

(51) Page on abolitionists from Bib. Index

(52) Close up of entries from slide # 51

(53) Abolitionist books from Bib. Index

cases, the entries refer you to parts of books, that is the section of the works devoted exclusively to a listing of sources. You can locate the book and hence the bibliography through our card catalog. (54)

Many of the bibliographies will contain journal article listings in addition to books and this will also be true of the footnotes found in scholarly volumes. Articles in periodicals, which are generally shorter in length than books and more concise, often reflect the most current interpretations of historical (55) problems. To gain access to these sources you will need the service of a periodical index.

All periodical indexes have limits; no tool indexes more than a small percentage of the total number of journals published. (56)
High school students often ascribe completeness to the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, a general index which (57)
analyzes primarily popular magazines such as Time, Newsweek, and Vital Speeches, and is therefore useful for current events and general non-fiction, but is severely limited in its offering of scholarly articles. (58)

Two more important indexes for students of history and related disciplines, both with subject approaches, are the Humanities Index and the Social Sciences Index, which began in June, 1974. (59)

For many years before that date, they were combined into one publication known as the Social Sciences and

(54) Collage of history journals

(55) Graphic of periodical indexes

(56) Outside of Reader's Guide

(57) Collage of journals in Reader's Guide

(58) Humanities and Social Sciences Indexes

(59) Graphic showing division of Index

Humanities Index and since dividing, the coverage has been greatly expanded. Each index analyzes about 200 journals, and unlike Reader's Guide, the concentration is on scholarly or research (60) oriented articles. The Humanities Index is most directly relevant for historical studies, indexing articles from journals most valuable to historians such as the American Historical Review, Civil War History, or Journal of Asian Studies, as well as scholarly articles in the arts, philosophy, literature, and (61) religion. The Social Sciences Index does not include history in the narrow sense but is essential to researchers needing journal articles in economics, geography, government, anthropology, and sociology, including such periodicals as Foreign Affairs, Rural Sociology, or Urban Affairs (62) Quarterly.

(60) Humanities Index and its journals

(61) Social Sciences Index and its journals

(62) Page of Humanities Index on Abolitionists

If we look for articles in the Humanities Index on our topic of Abolitionist thought, we notice that the 1974/75 cumulation lists two articles, both from the New (63) England Quarterly. In each entry, all journal names are abbreviated and there is a key to these names in the front of the index. The additional data given includes the author, title, volume of the journal the articles appeared in, the date of publication, and the page numbers. (64)

(63) Close-up of slide # 62

(64) Graphic showing time lag

The main advantage to these periodical ind es is

the relative speed in which you can retrieve articles. For both the Humanities and the Social Sciences Index the time lag is usually between six and eighteen months with most articles posted within nine months. There is ease of access (65)

(65) Repeat of Slide # 63

but, except for the title and subject headings, there is no information on the contents of journal articles. If you consult an index, you must make decisions on possible relevance from the limited data given. (66)

(66) Collage on abstracting sources

You can gain more information about the relevance of individual articles by consulting an abstracting source. (67)

(67) Typical abstract

An abstract goes beyond just a listing of bibliographic information, providing the researcher with some idea of the scope and objective of the article. It can help the student separate the articles that are most needed from those which are less essential. (68)

(68) America: History and Life -- outside

For United States History, the major abstracting tool is America: History and Life which summarizes articles from over 2200 publications which reflect on American history and its culture. (69)

(69) Title page of America: History and Life

It is published three times a year, and in addition to providing abstracts of current research, there is also a section listing book reviews and American history bibliography. (70)

(70) Page on slavery

Looking more closely at the abstract section, we find that entries in this source contain complete bibliographical

information and below this, one paragraph abstract on its contents. (71)

(71) Close-up of slide # 70

The abstract confines itself to the contents of the article and the abstractor makes no judgment on whether the article is good or bad. An abstract is not a review; the student himself must make up his own mind on whether to go further and read the complete (72) piece.

(72) Outside of Historical Abstracts

The second source, Historical Abstracts, is published by the same company and has an identical format. Its purpose is to summarize articles relating to political, diplomatic, economic, cultural, and intellectual history of the world, excluding the United States and Canada, (73) and it draws its articles from the same pool of journals and other serials as America: History and Life. (74)

(73) Page of Historical Abstracts

(74) Graphic of time lag

One major drawback to both of these two abstracts is the severe time lag between the date of publication of a particular article and its appearance as a listing in the abstracting tool. (75)

(75) Difference between Abstract and Index

For America: History and Life the lag is between one and three years, while Historical Abstracts has a time lag of between two and four years.

The Humanities and Social Sciences Index, while providing limited data on each article, are quick to post the articles from the journals they (76) analyze. For students writing papers, the abstracting

(76) America: History and Life with Historical Abstracts

reference tools will have their greatest utility for retrospective searching, that is, for gaining access to older articles. (77)

(77) Photo of Reference Room

We have talked about access to basic research sources, concentrating on the printed historical literature. We could have gone much further.

The study guide that accompanies the tape contains a listing of reference tools that we have dealt with in this program (78)

(78) Shot of student and librarian

and if you have any question on their use and relevance to your needs or any other research problems, may we suggest that you consult one of the librarians in our Reference Department.

(79)

(79) Opaque Blank Slide